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Defence of Paris 1870-1

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PANORAMA
OF THE
DEFENCE OF PARIS
AGAINST
THE GERMAN ARMIES

PAINTED BY F. PHILIPPOTEAUX

EXPLANATION
PRECEDED
BY AN HISTORICAL NOTICE
WITH A MAP OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE SEINE

PARIS
IMPRIMERIE ADMINISTRATIVE DE PAUL DUPONT
41, RUE JEAN-JACQUES-ROUSSEAU

—
1875

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PANORAMA

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41, RUE J.-J.-ROUSSEAU (HÔTEL DES FERMES)

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NOTICE

ON THE

DEFENCE OF PARIS

AGAINST

THE GERMAN ARMIES

**PREPARATIONS FOR THE DEFENCE. — MILITARY WORKS. — THE
ARMAMENT. — THE TROOPS. — THE VICTUALLING DEPARTMENT.**

Paris, as a fortified place, is surrounded by an uninterrupted inclosure extending for 33 kilomètres, comprehending 94 bastions, and protected by 15 detached forts, of which some would constitute real fortresses. This forms a retrenched camp of vast extent intended not only to defend the Capital and the immense riches it contains, but also to serve as a refuge to the french armies which, after having combatted on the different lines for the defence of the frontiers, might fall back to be reorganized under the covert of the forts, would hold the greater part of the enemy's forces in check, and thus enable the provinces to levy fresh troops.

Thus it was that at the very commencement of the war, the

existing fortifications were put into a state of defence, new works were raised on the culminating points which might (if taken possession of by the enemy), become dangerous for certain forts.

The improvements which had taken place in the artillery and which rendered it possible to impel with great precision and to a distance of at least 7 kilomètres projectiles weighing more than 100 kilograms, had rendered indispensable the occupation of certain heights which, at the time of the construction of the fortifications, were beyond the zone of the attacks.

On the 13th of August, four important redoubts were undertaken at Gennevilliers, at Montretout, on the flat of Châtillon and at the extremity of the counterfort of the Hautes-Bruyères. That of Gennevilliers was intended to secure the occupation of the peninsula, those of Montretout and Châtillon to prevent the enemies from establishing themselves in positions whence they might have done mischief to the Mont-Valérien, the forts of Issy, Vanves and Montrouge; that of the Hautes-Bruyères was to cover the forts of Bicêtre and Ivry.

Besides, different works and batteries of less importance were raised at the Port-à-l'Anglais, at the Moulin-Saquet, at the Moulin-de-Pierre, at the Château de Meudon, at the Capsulerie and on the hillock of Brimborion, to sweep the banks of the upper Seine, to search the ravines of Clamart, to sustain the redoubt of Châtillon and prepare the defence of the wood of Meudon by connecting the latter redoubt to that of Montretout.

The military Engineers were occupied in the completion of the defence of the forts by the inundations of Saint-Denis, by the construction of exterior works, breast-works, and protecting-masses on the remparts; the barracks and the powder-magazines were plated with iron, the covered ways were palisaded, the courts and accessory defences on the points of attack were provided with all necessary precautions, such as pare-éclats, torpedoes, sloping-roofs, etc.

The quarries that might have served as a shelter to the enemy were filled up or defended by mounds of earth, the catacombs explored minutiously, the houses hurtful to the defence demo-

lished, the villages standing in the neighbourhood of the fortifications prepared for defence, the bridges were undermined, the woods of Boulogne and Vincennes were partly razed; these were painful sacrifices, no doubt, but were borne heroically by the population sustained by the thought that the saving of the country might arise out of those ruins.

The putting the fortifications into a state of defence required labours not less important. It was necessary to provide for the safety of 9 railways and of 59 gates communicating with the open country, some of which were no less than 80 mètres wide, to close up some of those openings, to cover others by elevations of earth and to establish draw-bridges.

On the fortifications were to be constructed 40 powder-magazines and receptacles for the munitions of the siege large enough to receive a stock of more than 1 million kilograms of powder, to raise up traverses to shelter the national guard from the fragments of broken missiles, to prepare torpedoes on the principal avenues of the city, and to place on the Seine, above and below, stocades in order to arrest the enemy's fire boats, etc.

If we add to this the interior intrenchment of the Point-du-Jour, that of the park of the Muette, the marine batteries established in the Château de Saint-Ouen, on the flats of Montmartre and Chaumont, the wooden booths constructed by the service of the military Engineers or by the City for barracks or hospitals on the exterior bulwarks, the Esplanade des Invalides, the Champ-de-Mars, at the camp of Saint-Maur, in the plain of Courcelles, at the Luxembourg, the Jardin des Plantes and Longchamps; the powder-magazines organized at the Luxembourg, the Panthéon, the Invalides, etc.; we shall have given an idea of the multiplicity and importance of the works undertaken for the necessities of the defence, the execution of which was facilitated by the inexhaustible resources of the Capital and the patriotism of its population, without speaking of the barricadoes and other works within the walls due to the spontaneous impulse of different services.

Indeed, there was no lack of self-devotion : and the military services found efficacious assistants in the corps of the ponts et chaussées, of the mines, and in the different municipal and depart-

mental services, as well as in many private administrations, such as : those of the boats of the Seine, of the Omnibuses, and especially in the great Railway Companies ; the members of the Academy, the learned men attached to the Museum of natural history, offered spontaneously their useful cooperation, while companies were organized on a military footing to become the auxiliaries of the corps of the military Engineers.

The works were carried on with great activity, and continued during the night, with the help of the electric light, by more than 20,000 workmen.

About the middle of September, the redoubts of Gennevilliers, Montretout, Châtillon and the Hautes-Bruyères, as well as the other exterior works, were, if not quite terminated, at least in a state which permitted our soldiers to find in them excellent *points d'appui*; the forts and the fortified enclosure had nothing to fear from surprises or armed attacks on the part of the enemy.

Meantime, the Artillery placed on the parapets of the forts and the walls of Paris 1824 guns, among which were 200 of 24, 200 marin guns 0.16, 50 of 0.19 and one gun 24, which, placed in battery at the Mont-Valérien, was to send its projectiles weighing 100 kilograms to the foot of the terrace of the Château de Saint-Germain. Moreover, there was a reserve of 800 cannons to be conveyed on the points threatened by the enemy, 600 movable guns (1), 180,000 chassepots and 360,000 guns of diverse models for the arming of the troops.

Paris had also its fleet consisting of 5 floating batteries, 9 gun-boats and 6 sloops carrying altogether 24 guns, 19 of which were of great magnitude.

The troops hastily called together for the defence of the intrenched camp included the 13th and 14th corps, under the orders of general Ducrot, 94 battalions of mobiles, 18 of which were of the department of the Seine, 7,000 marines, the reserves of a great number of Infantry regiments, the gendarme-

(1) We must say, however, that a great number of those guns, of an ancient model and not fluted, could not strive against the new artillery of the enemy and were fit only for near defence.

rie, the firemen, the forest-guards, and more than 40 free corps. Those troops formed an effective of more than 240,000 men to which must be added 250,000 soldiers of the national guard, charged with the defence of the walls.

But to put the Capital into a state of defence was not sufficient; it was as necessary to provide it with food enough to keep alive a population of more than 2 millions of inhabitants. These provisions were collected during the month of August and the beginning of September as rapidly as was permitted by the railways encumbered as they were by the transport of the troops and war materials. Paris possessed towards the middle of September 30,000 oxen, 200,000 sheep, more than 78,000 quintals of corn, 210,000 quintals of flour, 5,000 quintals of meat salted or preserved, besides the provisions heaped up by the inhabitants, 100,000 horses and a certain number of mules.

Such was the situation when, on the 15th of September, the enemy appeared in view.

It was the advanced guard of the 3rd german army who presented themselves at Lagny, Villiers and Bonneuil.

Two armies were destined to invest Paris : the 3rd (prince royal of Prussia), and the 4th (prince royal of Saxony).

The 3rd had marched from Sedan towards the Marne, which they had crossed at Épernay and Château-Thierry; they advanced afterwards between the Seine and the Marne, to occupy positions on the left bank of the Marne and of the Seine, south of Paris. The 4th army, destined to occupy positions on the right bank, to the North, had marched to the right of the 3rd, following three roads, by Creil and Écouen, Compiègne and Senlis, Soissons and Dammartin. The advanced guard reached the environs of Pontoise on the 16th of September, and occupied the positions which were assigned to them, without striking a blow.

The 3rd army had to struggle for their positions. On the 17th, they threw a bridge over the Seine between Ablon and Villeneuve-Saint-Georges; on the 18th, they continued to extend on the south of Paris, by a movement from East to West, and passed beyond Palaiseau and Bièvres. Up to this time, there had been but few skirmishes of small importance.

On the 19th of September, four divisions of the garrison made an important sally, to reconnoitre, on the south of Paris, and had for 24 hours taken up their position on the heights before the forts of Issy and Vanves, at a short distance from the road which the german columns were following, on their march to Versailles.

The 15th german corps having come upon the French between the woods of Verrières and Meudon, suspended their march and faced them. Our right wing struck with a panic fell rapidly back to the walls and paralysed the attack at the very beginning. The enemies took up a strong position from Villacoublay to Petit-Bicêtre, and the 2nd bavarian corps, which arrived from Lonjumeau to Châtenay, came to occupy Sceaux and Bourg la-Reine, threatening to turn our centre if we advanced. The corps even tried to break from Bourg-la-Reine in the direction of Bagneux, but the fire of the fort of Montrouge arrested the manœuvre.

The defenders of the Capital resolved to abandon for the moment the advanced positions, blew up a great number of bridges, and retired behind the line of the forts. From that time the enemies were able to establish themselves in strong defensive positions and inclose the city in a circle of intrenchments, embattled walls, and strong batteries.

The two german armies, at the end of September, were ranged in the following manner :

DESIGNATION OF THE CORPS.	INFANTRY.	CAVALRY.	CANNONS.	POSITION.
4th Army.				
12th Corps	23,032	3,390	90	From Chelles to Aulnay.
Guard	23,991	4,361	90	From Aulnay to Montmagny
4th Corps	21,772	1,174	84	From Montmagny to Croissy
3rd Army.				
5th Corps	19,790	1,161	84	From Croissy to Sèvres.
11th Corps	17,910	1,038	84	From Sèvres to Meudon.
2nd bavarian Corps	20,248	2,759	102	From Meudon to the Bièvre
1st bavarian Corps	19,131	2,177	118	Between Montlery and Palaiseau.
6th Corps	22,889	1,262	84	From the Bièvre to the Seine.
Landwehr of the guard	8,946	»	18	
17th Division of the infantry .	9,920	1,189	36	From the Seine to Chelles.
Wurtemberg division	14,402	1,636	54	
2nd Division of the cavalry . .	»	2,824	12	From Saclay to Chevreuse
6th — — — — —	»	2,719	12	From Chevreuse to Neauphle.
5th — — — — —	»	4,647	12	From Neauphle to Poissy.
4th — — — — —	»	3,469	12	In observation near Orléans.
TOTALS	202,031	33,806	898	

Nevertheless, on the 23rd of September, the redoubts of the Hautes-Bruyères, Villejuif and the Moulin-Saquet had been retaken by the besieged. All the month of October was employed in finishing the defensive works of the forts and the walls, in connecting the forts one with the other by lines of intrenchments, in carrying out lines of counter-approach towards the enemy's positions and in organizing troops intended to operate outside the walls; it is thus that on the flat of Villejuif, in the peninsula of Gennevilliers, around Saint-Denis and in the valley of the Marne, intrenched camps were formed to the extent of more than 80 kilomètres of trenches. A great number of batteries were put in position; redoubts were constructed at Charlebourg, the Moulin-des-Gibets, Bois-Colombes, in the peninsula of Gennevilliers, and the work of the Petit-Parc in the bend of the Marne.

At the same time, strong reconnoitring parties were set on foot, and thus were brought about the battles of Chevilly, on

the 30th of September, that of Bagneux, on the 13th of October, that of Malmaison on the 21st of October.

On the 28th of October, some troops of the corps of Saint-Denis took by surprise the village of the Bourget, kept their positions in that place during two days, in spite of the continued fire of 40 of the enemy's cannon, but were obliged to retire on the 30th before the attack of 15,000 men of the prussian guard.

That evacuation, coinciding with the news of the capitulation of Metz and the negotiations that Mr. Thiers was carrying on with Versailles in order to obtain an armistice, caused an emotion in Paris of which some people took advantage to endeavour to overthrow by a popular revolution the Government of the national Defence, who remained after all masters of the situation.

At the beginning of the month of November, the troops of the defence were divided into 3 armies, and 4 marching companies were levied in each of the 266 battalions of the national guard.

As this division announced, a phasis of active defence was entered upon. On the 28th of November, the governor had the flat of Avron, before Rosny, occupied by 76 pieces of artillery : this place rises above the Marne and commands the passage near the junction of that river with the Seine. An energetic sally was to be attempted on the 29th, whilst several secondary attacks should be executed on the North, South and West, thus diverting the attention of the enemy from the principal attempt.

That attempt was delayed by the ill success of the establishment of some bridges of boats on the Marne, which were ready only on the 30th of November. Thus on the 29th the action was confined to a violent cannonading from the forts against the enemy's positions and the attack of the Gare-aux-Bœufs, at Choisy-le-Roi, and of l'Hay, by the troops under the orders of general Vinoy. On the 30th, the army of general Ducrot crossed the Marne on the bridges thrown over between Joinville and Nogent. That army of 60,000 men easily drove back the prussian posts from Villiers to Champigny. But on our right, the division Susbielle advancing from Charenton, after having oc-

cupied Montmesly, where the Germans had only grand'gardes, was vigorously attacked by the wurtemberg general Obernitz, supported by the prussian reserves cantoned at Valenton. The division Susbille fell back as far as Créteil. General Ducrot, at the end of the day, had occupied on the left only the line from Brie-sur-Marne to Champigny.

The demonstrations of the day before had been renewed on the side of Vitry and Choisy-le-Roi, and, on the North, the village of Épinay, on the road to Pontoise, had been taken and kept during the whole day. Meantime, the great battery of the flat of Avron was firing in the direction of Chelles and Gournay, in order to counteract the movements of the german troops who might advance from North to South towards the peninsula of the Marne, where, no doubt, the enemy felt the necessity of calling for re-inforcements.

The 1st of December was employed by the besiegers in preparing an offensive return against general Ducrot's positions, and by the latter in establishing himself strongly in those same positions; he was not disturbed in his works, the Germans being not yet in force before him. The enemy, re-inforced on the right and on the left, became during the night of the 1st to the 2nd, 50,000 men in number in the peninsula of the Marne, and early on the 2nd of December, they surprised and overthrew our advanced posts. But general Ducrot, on his side, had been re-inforced by the corps d'Exéa. The harricadoes of the villages and the possession of the heights from Brie to Champigny permitted him to arrest from 7 till 8 o'clock the success obtained at first by the Germans. At 9 o'clock, the german reserves were engaged on the brow of Villiers-Cœuilly. The combat was violent on the whole line; we were efficaciously seconded by the grand artillery that was firing from the right bank of the Marne. However, the Germans turned our positions and their blows were more fatal and more certain than ours. On the left, we retook Brie-sur-Marne from the Saxons and repulsed their renewed attacks; we were gaining ground on that side; the battle was turning to our advantage. The enemies then received by Villeneuve the support of a brigade and used all their efforts to prevent us from defiling from Champigny. Night ended the combat.

We had lost 6,000 men killed or wounded, of whom 414 officers. The losses of the enemy were nearly equal.

If the aim of the sally was to throw out an army beyond the german lines in order to join that of the Loire on the road of Orléans, that end was not yet attained. On the 3rd of December, our troops were brought back to the right side of the Marne, without being seriously disturbed during the passage of the river.

On the 21st of December, the same troops advanced in the plain before the fort of Aubervilliers and tried, in concert with the corps of Saint-Denis, to take the village of the Bourget, but the strength of the enemy's positions behind the inundations of the Morée, their numerous artillery, and above all, the excessive cold, which during one night froze to death more than 900 men in the trenches, caused that attempt to fail.

Meantime, the enemy was preparing powerful means of action against the forts and the city and thus to give satisfaction by the bombardment to the public opinion of Germany, that so long a resistance had irritated. They believed the famous *psychological moment* predicted by the german press to be now arrived. On the 27th of December, the powerful artillery, established by the besiegers at the Raincy, at Gagny and Noisy-le-Grand, ploughed up with their projectiles the flat of Avron, rendered that position untenable, and cannonaded at the same time the forts of Noisy, Rosny and Nogent; 3,000 shells fell on the batteries of Avron and from 5 to 6,000 on the Eastern forts or their neighbourhood.

This cannonading was but the prelude of a more intense bombardment. On the morning of the 5th of January, the besiegers opened their batteries of the southern heights, impelled more than 5,000 projectiles on the forts of Montrouge, Vanves and Issy, and began on the following night, without any previous summons, the bombardment of the city, a bombardment as cruel as useless, and which was not to advance the capitulation by a single day.

At that period, the enemy's batteries were established at the pavilion of Breteuil, near the station of Meudon, near the Châlets, on the hillock of the Moulin-de-Pierre, at the Plâtrière, on the flat of Châtillon, above the village of Clamart, at the

Tour-des-Anglais, at the Tour-de-Crouy, at Fontenay, at Bagneux, and comprehended 123 great guns.

The besiegers cannonaded also the redoubts of the Hautes-Bruyères, the Moulin-Saquet, and the village of Villejuif with artillery put in position in the village of l'Hay and at Chevilly. The forts of the south and the artillery of the walls often returned vigorously the shots of those batteries, forcing them some times to suspend their fire, and even blew up a powder-magazine at the batteries of the Moulin-de-Pierre of the Plâtrière de Châtillon. However, the enemy continued firing regularly on the town and especially on the public buildings, the prisons, the warehouses, the ambulances, the hospitals, and even on the cemeteries; here, the numbers are eloquent: the hospital de la Pitié received 47 shells, the Val-de-Grâce 75, the ambulance of the Luxembourg 80, that of the Jardin des Plantes 84, the Asile Sainte-Anne (an ambulance) 137, the cemetery of Montparnasse a considerable number. We must add that significant fact that the prison de la Santé received no more projectiles from the time that the Prussian prisoners were shut up in it.

It was then also that Paris began to suffer seriously from hunger. Every one remembers those interminable trains at the doors of the municipal butchers and bakers, in the rain or in the snow, in the midst of shells, to obtain a few grams of meat and 300 grams of bread containing at most 20 0/0 of corn-flour.

At this last period of the siege, the defence made a supreme effort; on the 19th of January, all the troops (infantry of the line and gardes mobiles) and the garde nationale mobilisée, attacked, without any possible chance of success, the embattled walls of the park of Buzenval.

On the 21st of January, the enemy tried, but vainly, to send into the quarters of the Villette projectiles intended, no doubt, to raise the numerous and restless population of those suburbs. At the same time, their batteries established at the Bourget, at Stains, at Pierrefitte, on the Butte Pinson, at Montmagny, at Deuil, at Montmorency, on the hillock of Orgemont, concentrating their fires towards Saint-Denis, covered with great projectiles the forts, the cathedral, the establishment of the Légion

d'honneur, ruining a great number of private houses, and aiming at the cemetery so that many inhabitants killed at that moment had to remain several days unburied. At the same date, the bombardment was extended to the redoubts of Saint-Maur and the Petit-Parc, the village of Joinville and even the fort of Vincennes, by means of batteries established at Champigny and Villiers.

Here we must recall the afflicting episode of a new insurrectional attempt, which took place on the 22nd of January and was as infructuous as that of the 31st of October.

On the 26th of January, at midnight, the basis of an armistice having been agreed between the Government and the chief of the German army, the fire ceased on both sides, and the following day, the news of that cessation of the resistance surprised an army and a population filled with the delusive belief that they might still have resisted.

Such were the principal events of that siege of 132 days, borne with a constancy beyond all praise.

The number of projectiles impelled by the German batteries during the last month may be estimated at more than 200,000, of which one half fell on the forts of Issy, Vanves and Montrouge. The fort alone of Issy received 60,000 of them. It was one of the most interesting points of the defence. This and the magnificent landscape that surrounds the fort of Issy caused that fort to be chosen for the central point of the Panorama.

THE PANORAMA

The spectator is placed in the fort of Issy, on a platform raised above the level of one of the bastions facing the attacks, and whence there is an extensive view of the country. The fortress of the Mont-Valérien, the forts of Vanves, Montrouge, Bicêtre, and the flat of the Hautes-Bruyères are distinguishable; even the watch tower of the Château de Vincennes may be perceived, at the foot of the hills which run from Montreuil to Fontenay-sous-Bois. The villages of Châtillon, Clamart, Meudon, Garches, Saint-Cloud, Boulogne, and the undulating heights which surround them or rise above them may be seen

at a short distance. It was on those heights that the Germans had established their batteries for the siege.

On the North is represented Paris with its monuments, its domes and its steeples. This view of Paris comprehending the annexed villages of Montrouge, Vaugirard, Grenelle, Auteuil and Passy, in which are detached, on higher ground, the elevations of Montmartre and Belleville, is surrounded by distant hills which form the Northern declivity of the basin of the Seine.

The fort of Issy, placed immediately under the eyes of the spectator, is seen in all its details of buildings, fortifications armament, etc.

The barracks and powder-magazines situated in the court yard are on fire or in ruins. The spectator assists at the removal of war-materials, which numerous workmen are executing. Some are dragging up, by main force, a cannon intended to replace one out of service on the ramparts; others are propping up a wall of support shaken and cracked by the falling of a bomb. These are unloading carts filled with war-materials; those, armed with mattocks and shovels, and carrying on their shoulders bags of earth, gabions or fascines, are going to repair a parapet overturned by the enemy's fire. Here, wounded soldiers are assisted by their comrades; there, men are rolling barrels filled with powder and removing loaded projectiles. During the preceding night, the garrison was obliged to carry away the ammunitions from a magazine perforated by the enemy's missiles; in the precipitation of the removal, some barrels and projectiles remained in the court-yard; they have been seen in the morning: several energetic men are hastening to convey them into an untouched casemate.—This operation was accomplished under the bombardment, and terminated without any accident (*historical*).—The spectator sees shells bursting on many points. On the ramparts, the cannoneers are at their guns and answering the fire of the German batteries, the smoke of which is distinguishable on the heights. The walls of Paris and a gun-boat on the Seine are acting jointly with the forts for the defence. One may recognize by the smoke rising from all the fortified points that the resistance is in full activity.

THE DIORAMA

If the Panorama exhibits what Paris was outside the walls during the bombardment, the Diorama shows what was passing within.

The spectator has before him the avenue d'Orléans in the month of January. The street and the roofs of the houses are covered with snow.

At the end of the avenue is seen the steeple of Montrouge; on the right hand, on the first plan, people of every age and condition are awaiting their turn at the door of a municipal butcher; on the left hand, a battalion of the national guard are repairing to the ramparts, and hackney-coaches surmounted by the ensign of ambulances, are bringing back the wounded. In the middle of the avenue is seen the removal of the household goods of a family fleeing away from the quarter bombarded; a wounded officier is being carried on a litter, and is accompanied by the Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes; farther away, funeral processions are going towards the cemetery of the South (Montparnasse).

At that moment, a shell strikes the corner of the butcher's house and shatters the wall to pieces by which several persons are killed or wounded; the people nearest to the wounded are rushing to their assistance; others are looking at the spot where the shell has burst and trying to get out of the way of the shivers of stone which have been impelled in every direction. The emotion is general and is reflected on every face.

On the left is observed the beginning of a conflagration which some firemen that have climbed on to a roof are exerting themselves to extinguish, and, far above, in the clouds, a balloon is seen on its way to carry news from Paris to the provinces.

PARIS

SEINE

Nota: Les méridiens et les parallèles sont tracés de 4 en 4 kilomètres à partir de l'Observatoire de Paris.





